

us do not agree, perhaps, as to just what a "super-state" is. But each of us may claim the privilege of Humpty-Dumpty, and make his words mean exactly what he wants them to mean, "no more and no less." None of us needs to feel cramped by other men's dictionaries. Black ink on white paper does not live by itself alone, even when the document be called a Covenant or a Constitution. So much is abundantly proved by the electoral college provisions of the Constitution of the United States. So the provisions of the Covenant, alone, will not tell us whether the League is a "super-state." We must see how they are applied in practice, how human beings act or refuse to act according to them. We must judge, not the League abstraction, debated in 1920, but the League actuality with a record of two years' achievements. A typical case may test our use of Humpty-Dumpty's privilege, and may help us to decide about using the ugly label "super-state."

The League's efforts to suppress the white slave traffic furnish an example. It was a subject on which there was little difference of opinion. No intense national prejudice was involved. No large vested interests could be disturbed. Everyone admitted that the International Conventions of 1904 and 1910 were inadequate since the war. It would seem a simple matter for a "super-state" to deal a death blow to this nefarious trade. Yet what actually happened? The first Assembly gave the matter long consideration. It concluded that experts would have to be assembled. Representatives of thirty-four countries met in a conference six months later, and adopted a number of recommendations which were included in a final act and laid before the Council. Then the British experts prepared a draft treaty, and copies were distributed to all members of the League. Later the Council approved the recommendations and the British draft, and passed them on to the second Assembly. Again, they were carefully considered by an Assembly committee, on which all members of the League were represented. This committee proposed that the Assembly should recommend that the draft treaty be signed then and there by those delegates who possessed the necessary authority and should request other delegates to seek such authority from their governments. When signed, the treaty would still not bind any government which had not ratified. But the committee's proposal precipitated a long struggle. The French and Yugoslav delegations stood out for another special international conference. They contended that the Assembly was not a treaty-making body. They pleaded for more time. Finally, when the Assembly adopted the committee's proposal, so many states abstained from voting that the force of the recommendation was greatly weakened. If such is the course of a friendly arrangement about a matter on which all interested states are substantially agreed, what are the chances of a state's losing its own individuality through the encroachments of the League?

On its present record, on the work of the two Assemblies, of the sixteen sessions of the Council, of the three International Labour Conferences, of the Brussels Financial Conference, of the Barcelona Transit Conference, of the Geneva White Slave Conférence, of the Paris Passport Conference, and of the numerous commissions set up to deal with special questions—on this record, only a very bold person can say that the League is a complete success. Only a blind person can say that the League is dead or dying. Two years have made it abundantly clear that the League rests on consent and not on coercion. As a mechanism, its form may be far from final; it may need to be readapted by each decade to meet its own needs;

but it works. As an institution, it may be weak; but it carries on.

Yet in a short two years, has not the League become a necessity? What other body exists that could take over its work, that could have settled the Aaland Islands case, that could have kept Poland and Lithuania out of war over Vilna, that could have drawn a boundary in Upper Silesia, that could have persuaded the Yugoslavs to quit Albanian territory? If the League were abolished tomorrow, its fifty-one members *might* in time be brought to agree upon some other scheme for organizing the world's peace. Mr. Balfour has said that it could not be done in this generation. Who can be sure that it *would* be done in this or even in the next generation?

MANLEY O. HUDSON.

CORRESPONDENCE

Professor Friday's Article

SIR: Professor Friday's article, *The Accumulation of Capital*, raises a number of questions with regard to the adequacy of the methods employed to secure an estimate of our national savings.

In the first place, the items summarized as "Capital exported, \$1,800,000,000," do not seem to represent actual savings during the year, but merely the excess of goods sold over goods imported. In so far as this excess of exports was obtained by depleting the inventories carried by our manufacturers and traders, the item does not represent an actual saving but merely a change in the form of our wealth. Considering the pressure which has been brought to bear upon business firms during the present year to reduce their inventories in order to reduce borrowings, considering also the disappearance of the motives which led to the piling up of unusually large inventories last year, it seems impossible that the "favorable" balance of trade bears any significant relation to the excess of production over consumption during the year.

A similar consideration applies to the item, "Building Operations other than corporate." The figure of a billion dollars obviously does not represent saving by the individuals who have built the homes, as such construction is financed chiefly out of borrowings and out of past savings. Neither does it measure a saving from the standpoint of the country as a whole, unless the lumber and other materials used up in the building operations have been replaced by new production. Moreover, there should be a deduction for buildings demolished during the year, and also for depreciation on existing buildings, in so far as it has not been offset by betterments. Finally, this item apparently duplicates in large part the item "Income saved by Agriculture and Businesses not Corporate."

The item last referred to also duplicates the first item, "Domestic Securities Purchased," as the saving of farmers and other owners of unincorporated businesses has taken the form largely of the repayment of debts, and the funds so repaid have been available for the purchase of new securities.

The item "Domestic Securities Purchased," which constitutes more than one-half the total estimated saving, is merely the figure for securities *sold*, and bears no obvious relation to the amount actually saved. Professor Friday has deducted from the total of securities sold those which are issued for refunding purposes, but he has failed to allow for the cases where securities have been issued to pay off bank loans. Yet the latter is the predominant type of security issued in 1921, and the funds realized by such sales are the identical funds which are invested in the new securities. Typically what has been taking place is something like this: Some corporations liquidate their inventories and deposit the funds in banks, or pay off bank loans. The shrinkage in general business makes it difficult for the banks to make new loans at prevailing rates, and interest rates work downward. Other corporations, which have not succeeded in liquidating their inventories issue bonds to secure funds to repay their bank loans. The bonds are sold to investors and speculators who pay for them, not out of their

savings, but by borrowing the funds which have been paid to or deposited with the banks by the first group of corporations. The repayment of loans with the proceeds of these bond issues again strengthens the lending power of the banks, the money market weakens, new bond issues are encouraged, and so the liquidating stage of the cycle proceeds.

The tremendous demand for bonds in the past few weeks does not indicate a tremendous increase in savings. It indicates that buyers are eager to take advantage of an unusual opportunity by borrowing money at, say, six percent and investing it in bonds yielding from seven to eight percent. When the disparity in the rates for short time and long time loans disappears, as it must unless business revives before the series of new issues to refund bank loans is completed, the demand for bonds will be less insistent, although saving will go on then as it does now.

Finally, the item "State, Municipal and United States Government Securities" indicates merely that funds have been transferred to the government, but means nothing with respect to national saving unless controlled by figures showing the purposes for which the funds have been expended. In so far as these funds have gone back into consumptive channels through payment of interest, pensions, compensation for disabled veterans, and payment for military and naval service generally, they indicate merely a shifting of purchasing power from one hand to another.

Any one of these errors might be overlooked, but the cumulative effect of so many lapses of method seems to be to make the entire calculation nearly valueless.

Chicago, Illinois.

C. O. HARDY.

A Reply to Mr. Hardy

SIR: If the facts concerning the reduction of inventories and the purchase of securities out of bank loans which Mr. Hardy hypothecates above actually existed; and if no allowance had been made for them in my article on capital accumulation, they would indeed "make the entire calculation nearly valueless." Every theoretical consideration which he mentions was in the mind of the writer in making his estimate. In so far as they were valid he has made liberal allowances for them.

Unfortunately the limits of a New Republic article do not allow one to set forth all the detailed figures which enter into a conclusion with respect to the volume of funds available upon the capital market within a year.

New York City.

DAVID FRIDAY.

The Mona Lisa Smile

SIR: When civilization started on its long journey and men raised their broods in caves, woman found that she must not laugh at the man thing that blocked the doorway or he turned sullen and refused to hunt the necessary meat for the children. Through succeeding generations this hard learned lesson has never been lost. But once a man named Leonardo caught, not the smile, but the ripple caused by its repression and fixed it on canvas for those who understand to read.

Surely this same ripple of repressed amusement must flicker over the faces of womankind the country over when a celibate Archbishop and other learned dignitaries bend the weight of their cerebral theorizing to the problem of birth control. "Children troop from heaven because God wills it," says Archbishop Hayes. True. But woman is the gateway through which they must enter: a gateway guarded by a flaming sword of pain and terror, a sword that earns for women and women only the right to say how many "souls from God" shall enter this world. Women both in and out of Mother Church, intuitively recognize this fact, for few indeed are those who live up to the possibilities of their fecundity, not because God wills it, but because women will it.

Inherent in every woman is the desire for children, but beyond and above that merely instinctive desire is the determination that certain conditions must be fulfilled or she will not bring children into the world. And it follows as the day the night that with the education of women and their broader outlook on life they will choose more and more intelligently the conditions under which they are willing to replenish the earth. That men should feel that on their shoulders rests the responsibility of stopping open

discussion of birth control and that by so doing they are changing women's attitude in the matter is—but isn't it hopeless, Leonardo? Men's sense of humor seems still somewhat abortive, so most of us listen to the thunders of the good Archbishop with downcast eyes and silent lips which he, no doubt, interprets as conviction of sin, but just between you and me, Leonardo, it is to smile, is it not?

ESTELLE TUFTS MORAN.

The League and the Peace Treaties

SIR: After your excellent editorial of October 5th, urging that "popular interest in the [Washington] Conference should prepare the way for an attitude of reasonable cooperation with the League," the following statement in your issue of December 7th has amazed me:

"The new association of nations proposed by Messrs. Harding and Hughes will possess a decisive advantage over the League of Nations. The League of Nations is still bound hand and foot by the instrument, the Treaty of Versailles, which created it. It cannot substitute conference for war as an agency of international legislation because the Treaty of Versailles derives its sanction not from consent but from force. The chief business of any future association of nations will not be to execute the Treaty of Versailles, but to discover and work out the most available and least costly means of revising it."

I assume that by "the Treaty of Versailles" you mean all of the treaties framed by the Paris Peace Conference, and not merely the peace treaty with Germany of June 28, 1919. Even with this broader construction of your reference, however, I think you have wholly mistaken the relation between the League of Nations and the treaties of peace.

The Covenant of the League does form Part I of the treaties of peace with Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria. Ratification of some or all of the peace treaties by twenty-nine of the signatories has made these states members of the League of Nations. But twenty-two other states have joined the League of Nations quite independently of other parts of the treaties of peace, and I am at a loss to understand why you consider the present League of fifty-one states "bound hand and foot by the Treaty of Versailles."

One may criticize the Paris Peace Conference for having embodied the Covenant in the peace treaties at all. In my judgment it is exceedingly doubtful whether any League could have been established by the Paris Peace Conference if President Wilson had not insisted that its covenant should form a part of the peace treaties. But this decision was not taken until some time in March, 1919, after many of the commissions working on the treaty with Germany had considerably advanced their work. In the earlier stages of the Peace Conference there was little willingness among the framers of the treaty to impose responsibilities on the League of Nations; but as the work of the Conference progressed the disposition increased to rely upon the League for future adjustments. Yet there are surprisingly few references to the League in the treaties of peace. I venture to think that nearly all of the parts of the peace treaties to which the New Republic objects contain no references to the League. The League has nothing to do with reparations, for instance, nor with the economic obligations imposed on the "ex-enemy" states. In fact, in the two years that it has now been in operation, very little of its activity has had anything to do with the peace treaties. It is true that the Council of the League took a decision with reference to Eupen and Malmédy. It is true that the Council assumed the guarantee of the provisions for protecting racial, linguistic and religious minorities contained in the Austrian, Hungarian, and Bulgarian treaties. It has appointed a high commissioner of the League for the Free City of Danzig, and a Commission representing the League of Nations is governing the Sarre Basin. But outside of these fields the work of the League has had little to do with the treaties of peace, and in League circles there has been a determined effort to keep the League from being or even seeming to be an instrument for their execution. The Supreme Allied Council and the Conference of Ambassadors at Paris are the bodies which "execute" the peace treaties, as you pointed out on October 5th. In fact, much of your past criticism of the League is based on the relative power of these bodies. In your issue of September 29, 1920, you found the League a "sideshow" on this account,

because as you said "the 'heart' of the Treaty [of Versailles]—the Reparations and Reprisal, is specifically excluded from the jurisdiction of the League."

I do not mean to say that the treaties of peace are not important political facts which largely shape the political structure of the world into which the League has been born and in which it moves. But how could any association of nations be free of these important facts? Has not M. Briand's speech at Washington recently shown us that the Washington Conference works under the same limitations as the League? I cannot imagine an association of nations which would not include Great Britain, France, and Italy, and certainly those powers are so connected with the treaties of peace that no association to which they belong can ignore the work of the Paris Peace Conference. It is in this sense, and in this sense only, that the League of Nations has been bound by the treaties of peace. And I think it is in this sense that any association of nations would be similarly bound. A new association, like the existing League, would have to function alongside the Supreme Council and the Conference of Ambassadors, as the world stands today.

Your insistence on the revision of the peace treaties raises altogether different problems. The League offers an agency to which Article XIX of the Covenant has given a special competence for suggesting the revision of those treaties. I see no reason for thinking that revision could be accomplished more easily in an "association" than in the League. The cooperation of the United States in either would make revision much less difficult. The sloughing off of parts of the treaties of peace is already under way—the trials for war crimes have been all but forgotten; many of the seized ships have been sold back to the Germans; reparations undergo a new arrangement almost every month. If the time should come when political thought in Europe would justify an avowed revision, the conference might be held under the auspices of the League quite as easily as under the auspices of some other association. The same governments must participate in either case.

Cambridge, Massachusetts.

MANLEY O. HUDSON.

Social Justice and the Roman Catholic Church

SIR: Let us pick out, for Mr. Charles L. Buchanan's information, the properly so called "political and sociological aspects" of America's hierarchical "Romanism," and examine them. We agree with him that "in so far as these aspects threaten to interfere with and obstruct the fundamental principles of this republic and human progress, they must be subject to open inspection and discussion."

Four Roman Catholic Bishops publicly issued a Social Reconstruction Program more than two years ago. They urged the gradual break down of the present capitalistic system and its substitution by a true co-operative commonwealth, through which the workers would come into the ownership of the instruments of production. The episcopal recommendations in effect involve the practical abolition of the existing wage slavery. One of the four Bishops, signing this Program, was Archbishop Hayes of New York. Afterward, the Program was substantially incorporated in the Pastoral letter of the entire American Hierarchy.

Ever since, Father John A. Ryan, director of the Social Action department of the National Catholic Welfare Council, has been measuring the economic reactions of the present period by the tape of this Program and Pastoral. Consequently, the Social Action department has come out squarely against the "open shop" movement and the general practice of wage reductions. In three vigorous public statements, at least, Father Ryan has criticized the reactionary tactics of anti-social employing capitalists, and encouraged the workers to insist upon their fundamentally Christian right to organize and bargain collectively. A few weeks ago, Cardinal O'Connell himself, also publicly castigated attempts to choke the voice of labor by injunction.

In fact, no Christian Church in the United States has gone as far as the Roman Catholic Church in her authoritative and public utterances upon the injustice of modern commercialism, which Father Husslein, the Jesuit sociologist of Fordham university, characterizes as antagonistic to the entire spirit of Christianity.

Mr. Buchanan's ignorance can be due only to one fact—ironically enough, he refrains from reading the radical, liberal and labor publications. For the capitalistic organs, including the

press associations, in the large have killed and continue to kill the news story of the Catholic Church's efforts to aid in effecting social justice, that is in realizing "the fundamental principles of the republic" and bringing about true "human progress."

Surely, it is a strange and extraordinary "surreptitious censorship," which in the suspicion of Mr. Buchanan "the Roman Catholic Church organization" imposes upon "our American press." Incidentally, our own conviction is that Mr. Buchanan's "American press" from a social justice point of view is neither "ours" nor "American."

New York City.

JOHN HEARLEY.

Raymond Poincaré

SIR: Raymond Poincaré, premier and minister of foreign affairs, may or may not be the same Poincaré, who led the "Bloc National" and who in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* told France what spoils she was entitled to by her victory in a war of defence. Political prophecy, especially as regards French politics, is an interesting, but hazardous game. The Paris correspondent of the New York Times reminds us how often in the past French politicians have sobered down when once they have reached the goal. Briand's "rouge" became "rose pale" once he became separated from ordinary citizens by numerous anti-chambers and huissiers. Therefore we are led to hope and believe that perhaps the new French premier will, by a certain natural law of French politics, converge towards the Centre—and reach a working agreement with the groups of the Left. But at best it would be but a compromise—and France has had about as many compromises as are good for her. What she needs is a violent remedy—a good, strong inoculation, and it is submitted that the very best virus for her system is the virus of "nationalisme à outrance." Let her under the guidance of her Lorraine fire eater fling defiance to Europe and America, with her great armies of "poilus" and her fleets of submarines, let her wreck the Entente Cordiale and set at nought the work of the Washington Conference.

Let her. And then one day, her citizens will awaken and discover that the world is estranged from them—hidden behind a wall of bayonets—French bayonets. Thus by a process similar to that discovered by Pasteur, France will recover. And her people, sick to death of her leaders, drugged by the dreams of imperialism, will turn to others, worthier of her trust. And a wiser, saner France will cooperate with Great Britain and the United States, to make this world a better place to live in. Let Poincaré do his damndest!

New York City.

FRANCIS COLT DE WOLF.

Mr. Beck's Communication

SIR: Pointing out new inaccuracies in Mr. Beck's communication, after the letters of Mr. Frankfurter and Mr. Arnold, is like carrying coals to Newcastle. However, the Solicitor-General, in his excursion into Russian history, makes some statements which really require comment. He darkly insinuates that "Some one in the Wilson administration intervened to secure the release of Trotsky when the English government had the arch-anarchist in irons at Halifax." Leaving to the anarchists of the world the task of correcting Mr. Beck's poetic but inaccurate characterization of Trotsky as "the arch-anarchist," it may be observed that the dominant factor in securing Trotsky's release was a note sent to the British government by Foreign Minister Miluykov, acting under pressure from the newly formed soviets.

W. H. C.

Not "To Really Spoil the Game"

SIR: I send you the following editorial lead (gratis); this is genuinely advance stuff.

The foot ball conference will soon meet in New York to establish the 1922 rules, and the arms conference in Washington carries on. It is believed forward passing and the use of poison-gasses will come up for discussion, and perhaps for some modification, but in neither case will anything be done to really spoil the game.

EZRA BOWEN.

Easton, Pennsylvania.

The Boddy Case

SIR: There are several phases of the Boddy case that should make New Yorkers look to themselves a bit,—that is, to the municipal government that they must stand sponsor for. I hold no brief for the accused man,—nor, in part of what I shall write, am I concerned with his color. Rather do I want to speak for all poverty-burdened, alien, defenceless folk whom we persecute, torture and sometimes kill by our "legal" machinery. I want to hold up to my fellow Americans the mirror wherein they can see a certain type of their unjust, unAmerican and unChristian selves. I want to show them the other side of the Boddy case which is like unto many other criminal cases, be the accused white or black.

Boddy said: "In New York City what they mean by taking you to the station house, means to kick you round for two or three hours; and I had that done to me several times." The point is many absolutely innocent men and women, black and white, can say that same thing! It is the vicious "Third Degree" that this man had experienced and that had had such an effect on him that he "saw red" and added another to the crimes for which society blames *him*, to the exclusion of itself. He knew that many a man had been killed by the "Third Degree," and he simply struck first. He was a coward. Yes, but what about the police officials who use the virtue of their place and power to torture and maim certain of the hapless persons who fall into their hands? He is a murderer. Yes, but how about the officials who, in cold blood, have carried their torture beyond the physical endurance of their helpless victims? Not only New York City but the country must face this question of the abuse of citizens under arrest and this matter of murder under the sanction of law! Are not we who fail to condemn this persecution, not to speak of those who applaud it, are we not cowards, too?

Boddy said, also: "Why should I always be beat up for nothing?" It is not alone as a Negro that he must so speak. The alien, the friendless, the feeble-minded,—he who is merely "different," has to ask, all too often, this same pitiful question. And society has no answer to it. Does this not show that the "Boddies" are not wholly to blame and that there is another side to every tragedy such as the one we are considering?

"Boddy's extradition," says one of the reports, "his trial, conviction and execution will be accomplished in record-breaking time." Yes,—and why? Because he has no money and no influential friends and because he has a black skin! A European once said to me: "Justice(?) in your country can be bought like a pound of cheese." That is not the worst of it. "Justice" is, in truth, regularly sold to the rich and it is as regularly denied to the poor, the oppressed and the alien. Who is there to disprove this? The best one can say is that there are exceptions to this oft-made charge—but they are not so many that one feels much like bragging about them. But to take the particular case of the Negro. Has not the time come when every lover of justice must ask himself, "can it be that the region in which the colored man, generally speaking, is bound to be denied justice, can it be that that region is widening?" If the Negro was the only one to suffer from such a state of affairs, there might be some inhuman enough to acquiesce in it; but injustice, like hate, is a two-edged weapon: it halts the progress of the people or the country where it obtains as much as it does the individual or the racial group against which it is directed. The Boddy case furnishes not so much an opportunity to damn the Negro (and thereby lower ourselves) as it does an opportunity to consider seriously our own shortcomings; that is to say, those of our hired men whom we appoint or elect, and for whose unlawful and unAmerican acts we are, before God, responsible. It gives us the chance not merely to convict a murderer, but to demand of ourselves what part society has had in the evolution of that murderer; and, in the case of this young Negro,—what share the "law" may have had in the particular crime for which he must stand trial. It puts up to the white American the question whether the black American has not more against him, than he has against the black man.

Shall we not all of us who profess to be decent and fair-minded citizens recognize this matter of criminality in official positions,—particularly the criminality of the "Third Degree"? Shall we not arraign ourselves, together with the Boddies that such criminality helps to make?

New York City.

BLANCHE WATSON.

The French Indemnity

SIR: Was it really so utterly unreasonable of the French to think that the first few instalments of the indemnity could be paid according to the agreement, as one would gather from your columns? The whole indemnity is a very different question; probably no one expects that to be paid in full,—but the first four or five years' instalments?

Fifty years ago Germany dictated terms of peace to France, one term being military occupation of northern France till the indemnity should be paid. In a little over two years France paid the whole five milliards,—France with less than half the population, and incomparably less resources than Germany has. All this during a time of internal confusion and troubles greater than those Germany is passing through, and when the franc was worth more than the gold mark is now. In view of this achievement, it will hardly impress the unbiased observer that the immediate demands on Germany are extortionate, or the expectation that they will be met irrational.

Professor Thorstein Veblen has suggested a very edifying means of paying the indemnity, or part of it,—the confiscation, and public sale in lots to suit, of all the landed estates in the former empire. This would at least place the cost of peace where it belongs, on the class that made the war.

It is difficult in reading the liberal journals these days, to refrain from the suspicion that their sympathy with the aggressor in the late war has impaired their vision of possibilities, as well as of justice and equity; and has also impaired their judgment of individuals.

Ashland, Massachusetts.

W. C. ROSE.

[That France should have received the amount of money represented by the first few instalments and a great many more—would be a perfectly reasonable assumption, if it were possible to make a different question of the whole indemnity, as our correspondent suggests. It is universally agreed that Germany cannot pay in gold and therefore her power to pay abroad depends on her volume of exports, and on the loans she can raise abroad. Her exports are not now sufficient to pay anything like the current indemnity charges, and her capacity to raise loans abroad has been entirely destroyed by "the whole indemnity." It is unreasonable—in a practical sense—to expect payment in the circumstances. As for Professor Veblen's suggestion, it dodges the difficulty of finding buyers of the German lands who are in a position to pay for them in gold, or foreign exchange. If moneyed men from France, England and America were willing to buy at gold prices lands situated in Germany, the scheme would work. They are not willing to do that, probably for very good reasons.—THE EDITORS.]

China's Disillusionment

SIR: To your editorial in the last issue of the New Republic regarding the painful road for China to travel after the great disillusionment of the so-called international justice, I, a Chinese student in this country, ask to add only a few words.

The Chinese people now, are perfectly conscious of these facts:—

(1) That foreign exploitations have so far been successful in China, is not so much because of the malignity of the foreign governments and capitalists concerned, but mainly because of the unfortunate Chinese national trait of love of peace.

(2) That round the globe hundreds of millions who outnumber several times their exploiters and conquerors, have their grievances far more intensive than those of the Chinese and are now awakening and brewing and threatening.

It is true, therefore, that the road before the Chinese is really dangerous and painful, but the danger and the pain are by no means to be confined to any one people but to mankind as a whole. Non-cooperative? Yes, but cooperative we must be with all the rest.

The Chinese people, however, still hesitate. Why? For civilization and order are as dear (perhaps dearer) to the Chinese as to any of the self-dubbed civilized peoples. Now that the saving of these dear things has proved incompatible with that of their own being, hesitation serves only to intensify the degree and magnify the extent of their determination. Yet in whom lies the responsibility!

Chicago, Illinois.

FAN YI KUNG.

The Love for Three Oranges

ON December 30th Serge Prokofieff's opera, *The Love for Three Oranges*, was produced at the Auditorium Theater in Chicago. It is unquestionably the most interesting stage production of the year 1921, not excepting *Liliom* as put on by the Theater Guild, and the Chicago Opera Association is to be congratulated accordingly. Performances like this one, and John Alden Carpenter's *The Birthday of the Infanta*, must convince contributors to the enormous annual deficit of the Chicago Opera Company that their generosity is worth while, for they make a magnificent addition to the art of musical drama in America.

For three years Mr. Prokofieff's opera has been heralded, after the quaint manner of the Opera Company's press agent, as a production upon which sixty, eighty, and finally a hundred thousand dollars had been spent, but beyond this financial ecstasy, the public was allowed so little advance knowledge of what it was all about that one is tempted to believe that even the astute Miss Mary Garden herself was unaware of what she had stowed away in the warehouse. Certainly, the audience assembled for the opening had no anticipation of the nature of the novelty in store for them, and the critics, defensively attentive, were in much the same box. An important world première was never less heralded.

The production is unique, although it is of the same general type as Rimsky Korsakof's *Coq D'Or*, Stravinski's *Petroushka*, and Debussy's *Pelleas et Melisande*. The outstanding point of difference is that Mr. Prokofieff has achieved perfect unity. His opera is a closely knit thing; one cannot extract from the whole the score, the scenery, or the action, and subject any one of them to isolated criticism; the three are interdependent and indissoluble. For once in a way Truth walks unashamed upon the boards where for generations passion has halted for arias, and death has been obligingly arrested for sextettes. At last Grand Opera, so called, has become a dramatic production.

The story is a fairy tale, slight, entirely fantastic, and burlesque, at that. There is a Prince, dying in a melancholia, who may be cured only by laughter. He is a comic Prince, treated with delightful irony. The first act concerns itself with amusing efforts to make him laugh. It is really funny. You never would have dreamed that those conventional bassos and contraltos had so much comedy in them. Mr. Ziegfeld will look at them with envy. At length the Prince laughs—of course he does,—so do godlike bank presidents and stodgy business men out in the house pinching themselves the while to see if it can be true,—but he is no sooner cured of his fatal sadness than he is cursed by a malignant witch with love for the Three Oranges, which, succeeding acts reveal, contains, each one, a traditionally beautiful blonde Princess. The tale unfolds with delightful unreality, through scenes of enchantment and wizardry, all done in comical burlesque, to the finale, when a rat sitting demurely upon the King's throne, turns into the Prince's love, and the wicked plotters, with their obliging witch, vanish, defeated, into a vague and fiery oblivion. It is Grimm and Andersen and Pushkin done over for grownups; it is childhood revisited, with an adult point of view.

Mr. Prokofieff's score is a masterpiece of modern descriptive music, and is ultra-modern in orchestral treatment. It conducts the action through four acts and ten scenes of extraordinary color, with skill and humor. It

is never thin, and never vacantly boisterous; it is impressionistic, vivid, and episodic, with melodies obscurely interwoven one with another, covered in the orchestral mass, and it is brilliantly funny. It is true that there is nothing in the entire score which one may whistle as one goes out; there is no contest between a flute and a soprano; there is no melting tenor solo in the spotlight, and the troglodyte who believes he may advance only by looking backward, shakes his head over Mr. Prokofieff because his work is reminiscent of nothing. There are, however, at least two tunes which the most Victorian critic may safely enjoy. In the court scene Mr. Prokofieff has introduced a march which even Mr. Sousa might envy,—a smashing, crashing, quick step which will, I predict, be much used as an isolated thing,—like the march from *Aida*; and there is the Prince's song when the cure is wrought and he bursts into laughter. It is impossible to imagine anything gayer than this. The Prince laughs, a high startled reluctant sound. It comes quicker and wilder, and gradually the relieved court joins in, until the song becomes an abandonment of joyous guffaws. The singers hold their sides, the gorgeous court rocks with mirth, and so does the sympathetic house. It is only an ingrate who would demand sweet melodies; with Mr. Prokofieff's crackling, shimmering miracle in the air, melody seems no more indispensable than a pretty, stupid woman of the eighteen-eighties.

Cartoons have already been published of Boris Anisfeld's scenery, but no black and white reproduction can adequately portray the blaze of color as revealed on the stage. Rose and scarlet, orange and purple, sapphire and gold, backdrops of wild sunset skies, foregrounds of burlesque court furnishings, deserts, mountains, and witches' caverns, all are beautiful beyond reality, and all share the happy over-emphasis of the whole production. Mr. Anisfeld's imagination runs gladly along with Mr. Prokofieff's; his exaggerated settings and his gorgeously capricious costumes are the pattern to the warp of the piece. No stage sets have ever been more beautiful or more daring than these. He has builded his art not upon the sand of the specious producer, but upon the solid rock of Diaghileff, Gordon Craig, and Reinhart, and to a courageous color sense, and an extraordinary feeling for mass on the stage, he has brought extravagant humor.

If it be true, as one gathers from reading the critics, that every ointment must have its fly, I will confess that there is, in my opinion, one way in which Mr. Prokofieff's effect is not completely successful. He uses choruses of Lyricists, Tragedians, Comedians, and Empty Heads, which intervene upon the action, and every now and then, arbitrarily clear the stage. Undoubtedly the aim is to heighten the unreality by thus emphasizing the "staginess" of the performance, and to poke good natured fun at the sentimentalists,—God bless 'em,—but the result is a somewhat muddled interference. It is an idea which Mr. Bernard Shaw might have used successfully; he, and, I think, he alone, could give it the ironic quality necessary to its success.

This, however, is carping criticism. *The Love for Three Oranges* is a spirited and brilliant piece of work, beautifully given, and New York should demand several performances in the repertoire of the Chicago Opera Association at the Manhattan Opera House this winter. It is the last word in modern stage production, and it is to be hoped that New York critics will not be afraid of its novelty and daring quality.

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